

# Uncle Sam's embarrassing his friends

**H**ow embarrassing. Back in 1985, the U.S. State Department agreed with Moscow that once Soviet troops began to pull out of Afghanistan, American aid to the resistance would be terminated. No one, however, seems to have told President Ronald Reagan. It just sort of happened.

If such dizzying laxness is causing red faces in Washington, imagine the reaction in Pakistan's capital, Islamabad. Pakistan is the key player in the complex diplomatic quadrille now underway that many hope will bring an end to the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.

For the past eight years Pakistan has sheltered 3.5 million Afghan refugees, provided bases for the mujahedin, and resisted mounting threats from the Soviet Union. The Soviets have been fought to the bargaining table by a combination of mujahedin heroism and Pakistani toughness.

Pakistan has had to pay a heavy price. Soviet and Afghan communist agents have caused more than 1,000 terrorist incidents inside Pakistan, ranging from car bombs to attempted assassinations. In fact, Pakistan is by now the world's leading victim of terrorism. Afghan aircraft and guns regularly bomb or shell Pakistani border villages and refugee camps. And the presence of 3.5 million Afghan refugees has brought some grave social problems to Pakistan.

Before the Afghan war, Pakistan had almost no heroin addicts. Today, it is estimated there are more than 100,000 alone in Karachi. Afghanistan has become the world's chief source of brown heroin.

Pakistan's leader, President Zia ul-Haq, has quite literally gone out on a limb by backing the Afghan resistance and defying a menacing Soviet Union and a non-too-friendly India. Critics inside Pakistan have urged



him to ditch the mujahedin, loosen links with Washington and make a deal with Moscow. One day soon, they warn, the undependable Americans will pack up their Samsonite bags and pull out, leaving Pakistan alone to face a vengeful Soviet Union.

The U.S. Congress, responding to pressure from Israel, has enlivened such fears by threatening to cut off vital economic and military aid over the question of Pakistan's nuclear program. India, heavily armed by the Soviets, keeps growing at Pakistan.

In the midst of this tense situation, Pakistani diplomats are trying to shape an agreement in Geneva to end the war. Some sort of face-saving formula must be found to ease Soviet withdrawal. Now that an agreement is in sight, the resistance alliance is being pressured to agree to a coalition government in Kabul with "acceptable" Afghan communists — something the mujahedin have firmly rejected in the past. The Soviets are pressing Pakistan to shut down mujahedin bases and use its army to police any peace agreement. Obviously, Pakistan does not want to do this, but Islamabad is also under heavy American pressure to make a deal.

So far, it seems the Soviets have agreed to pull out in less than 10 months, and to "front-load" by large initial

troop withdrawals. But no accord is yet in view over the key question of the makeup of a coalition government, how to protect one from wrathful mujahedin "rejectionists" nor how to cope with the fact the entire Kabul regime is run by the secret police, or Khad, which, in turn, is run by the Soviet KGB.

And, as mentioned in past columns, there are many, many fears that chaos will follow a partial Soviet withdrawal and could quickly lead to civil war. Who knows? The Soviets might not pull out totally or could even roll back south. After all, the Red Army engineers are still busy building roads and barracks.

At this delicate moment, we learn that President Reagan does not really seem to know what's going on in the negotiations. U.S. conservatives are grumbling that the liberal-dominated State Department is pushing Pakistan and the mujahedin into a bad deal — just to win election points for the Republicans.

In fact, the Pakistanis must often wonder who is in charge of policy in Washington: A weary, out-of-touch president, a secretary of state who appears to have been lobotomized, or Congressmen who are too busy soliciting political contributions to care what happens overseas. With allies like this, who needs enemies.

And what next? When the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, the U.S. had a former peanut farmer from Georgia as president. Then a genial movie actor from California. The next president, whose policies will affect the entire world, could be a dwarf like Richard Gephardt, Michael Dukakis or even an ex-faith healer named Pat Robertson. It's hard to say whom such prospects worry more, America's friends or enemies. And hard to imagine what the West would have done without Zia to hold the fort in Pakistan.